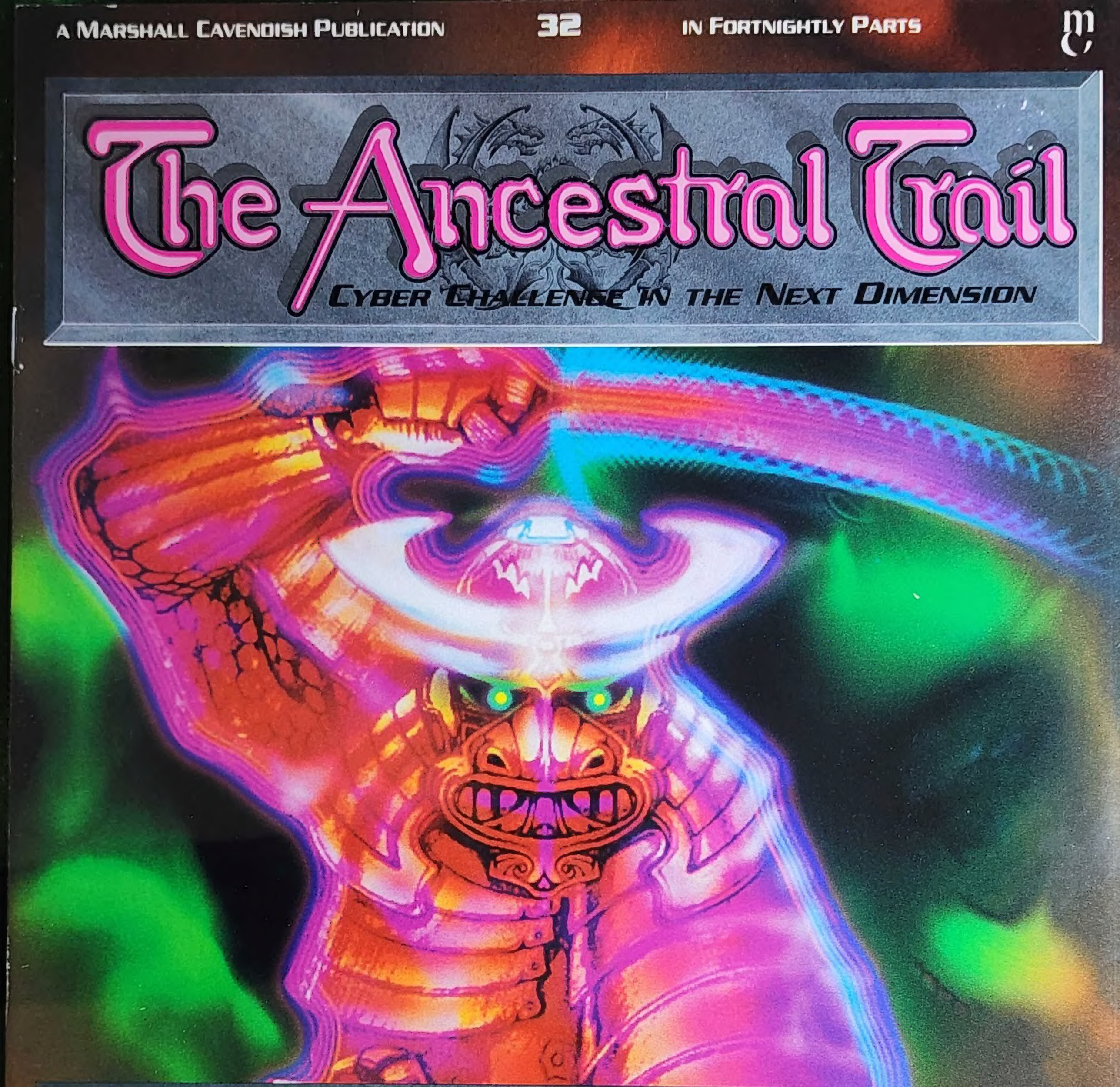
A Marshall Cavendish Publication 32 In Fortnightly Parts

The Ancestral Trail

Cyber Challenge in the Next Dimension



32 Husasan, Silicon Samurai

Duel of doom with an android warrior

Julek Heller

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In the thirty-second sector

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A chill travelled down Richard's spine as the small but lethal-looking robot moved towards Robo. A sound resembling the whine of a dentist's drill could be heard as its chainsaw arm whirred into action.

Richard watched as the robot picked up a piece of metal near Robo and sliced the fragment in half with an effortless sweep of its diamond-tipped blades. It had apparently not seen the crouching figures of Richard and his companion amongst the rubble. When it had finished its task, the robot moved back in the direction from which it had come.

Discovered

"What was that?" Richard whispered.

"Dakom. Metal Collector," replied Robo, making no attempt to lower the volume of his metallic voice.

"Sshhh!" Richard hissed, but it was too late. The dakom stopped in its tracks and turned to face the source of the noise.

With a blinding flash the creature fired a laser beam which struck Robo's torso, producing a shower of molten metal. The force of the blast knocked Richard's companion over on to his side.

Desperately searching for an exit to the chamber, Richard and Robo scampered over the piles of scrap metal and waste. Laser bolts pierced the air as the dakom gave chase.

ROBO RETALIATES

"Quick! Over here," called Richard, spotting what looked like a service hatch. At that instant came an even brighter flash of light. Richard turned to see that there was a new addition to the robot graveyard. Robo had scored a direct hit with his own laser beam. The dakom lay still, silver liquid oozing from a gaping hole in its chest.

Richard reached the service hatch. It was circular, with handles coated in rust. He tried to open it.

"More dakoms approaching," Robo said as Richard struggled with the hatch. "Advise immediate evacuation of area."

With a high-pitched squeal, the hatch sprang open. Richard squeezed himself through and turned to help Robo struggle through.

The robot pushed his unwieldy form through the hatch and Richard slammed it shut. Instantly, a beam of light came from Robo's heat ray lens. It struck the hatch.

Richard gasped and then realized what Robo was doing. The robot was welding the hatch shut. Soon he had ensured that the dakoms were safely sealed away on the other side of the opening.

Signs of life

With every sinew in his body aching, Richard paused for breath and looked around. He and Robo were in a dark chamber. The way their voices echoed told Richard that the room had to be very large. Then he became aware of another sound. They were obviously not alone.

Richard heard a sound like the crack of a whip. Whatever else was in the chamber with them was definitely not friendly. He turned his head towards the noise and his heart sank.

Towering over him and clutching a giant, glistening sword was an armour-clad figure that exuded pure menace.

Robo's circuits whirred into action as he scanned the creature. "Husasan, silicon samurai," he announced. "Silicon alloy composition. Impervious to attack. Advise evasive action."

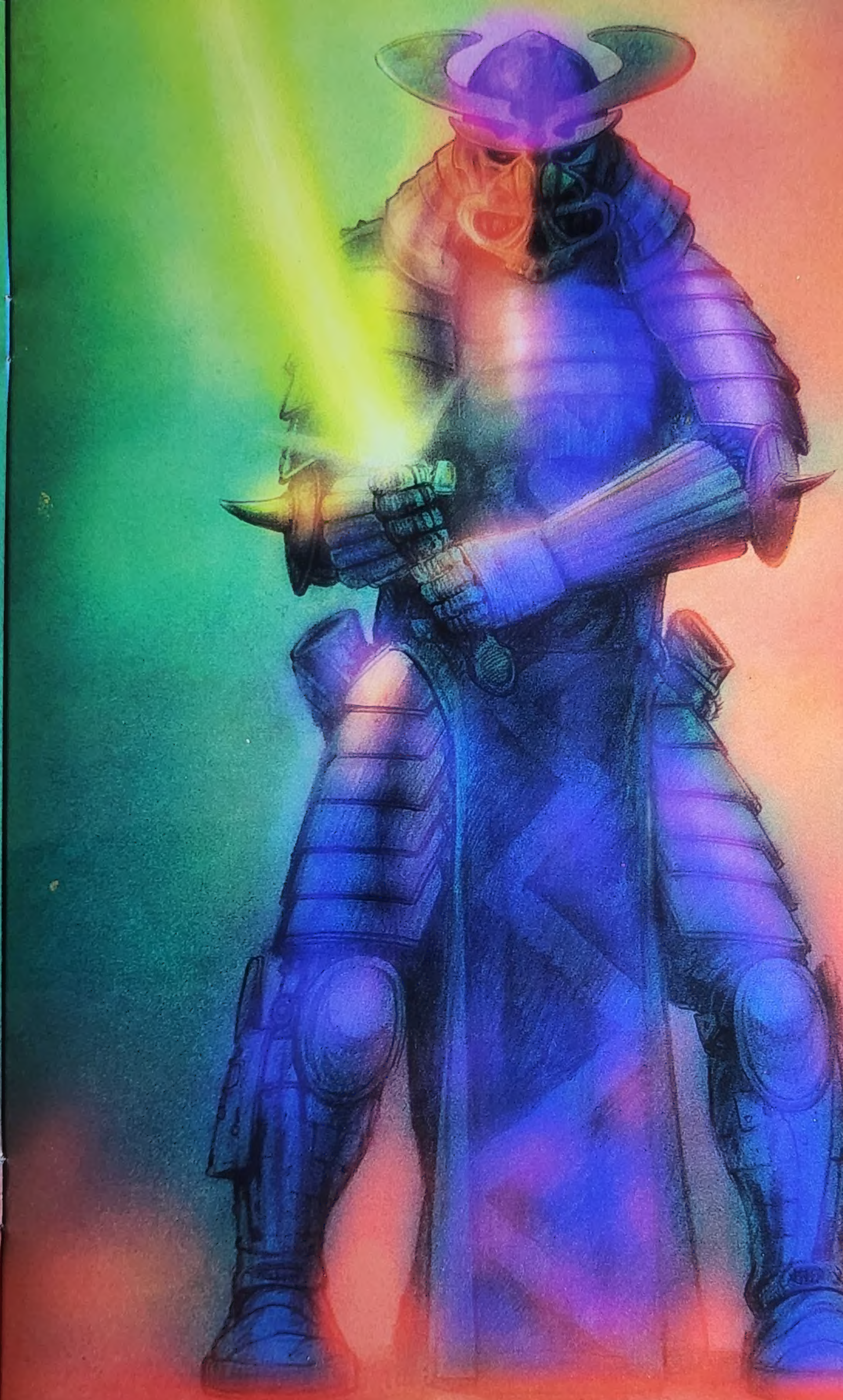
Richard drew his sword and pointed it towards the newcomer. Husasan stood still and stared intently at Richard. "What is he doing, Robo?" Richard asked.

"Husasan is scanning you for possible weaknesses," Robo said.

Richard swivelled his head, desperately seeking a way out of the chamber. He was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. He could try to open the service hatch and face the dakoms. Or he could stay where he was and do battle with the giant silicon warrior. Suddenly, the choice was made for him.

Battle with an ancient warrior

Without warning, Husasan leaped into action. Assuming a fighting stance, the metallic creature swung his sword in a huge arc. Richard pulled away from the blow but its sheer force was enough to knock him off his feet. Desperately trying to avoid Husasan's sword, he rolled along the ground,



A shower of multi-coloured sparks lit up the chamber as Husasan's sword missed Richard and struck the floor.

In the corner of his eye, Richard could see that Robo was firing his heat ray at Husasan. It might as well have been a water pistol for all the effect it was having on their gigantic assailant.

Then Richard noticed that a new message had appeared on Robo's binary panel. As Husasan turned his attention to Robo, Richard hastily translated the cryptic phrase.

He searched his mind for a solution to the strange words. With a flash of inspiration, he finally understood their meaning.

"Robo, fire at its ankle!" Richard cried.

Unfortunately, Robo was too busy avoiding Husasan's attacks to pay any heed to his words. The robot had erected a forcefield around himself, but it did not look as if Robo had enough power to sustain it for much longer.

Richard decided that it was time that he re-entered the fray.

SWORD FIGHT

He swung his sword and caught Husasan in the back. The attack had no effect other than to enrage the monster even more. It turned to face Richard, its sword pointing menacingly at him.

Richard knew that the only way that he

could prevail against the armoured creature was to aim for its ankle – but which one?

He glanced down anxiously and spotted what he was looking for. On the side of Husasan's right ankle was what looked like some kind of switch.

Blades clattered as Richard attempted to parry Husasan's powerful blows. He had no chance. Husasan's strength was far superior to his opponent's.

A slap from the samurai's gloved hand sent Richard sprawling through the thin cyber air.

He landed flat on his back. The shadow of Husasan cast a silhouette of doom over his aching body. The creature seemed to be enjoying the uneven battle.

Richard groaned as Husasan placed a boot over his throat and raised his sword above his head. Yet amid his panic, he realized that now he could reach Husasan's ankle.

Richard swung his sword with every ounce of energy he could muster. It struck Husasan directly in the heel. Richard pushed hard and the sword pierced the switch. Immediately, a shower of dense, acrid steam gushed from the wound.

Husasan finally spoke. It was a scream of agony which reverberated through the chamber. As he screamed, Husasan stopped moving and remained standing above Richard as if frozen in time.

End of the warrior

Small cracks began to appear all over Husasan's armour. The cracks widened and spread. The samurai was breaking up. Like a snake shedding its skin, splinters of silicon began to fall away from him.

"I've done it!" Richard called to Robo. "Let's get out of here!"

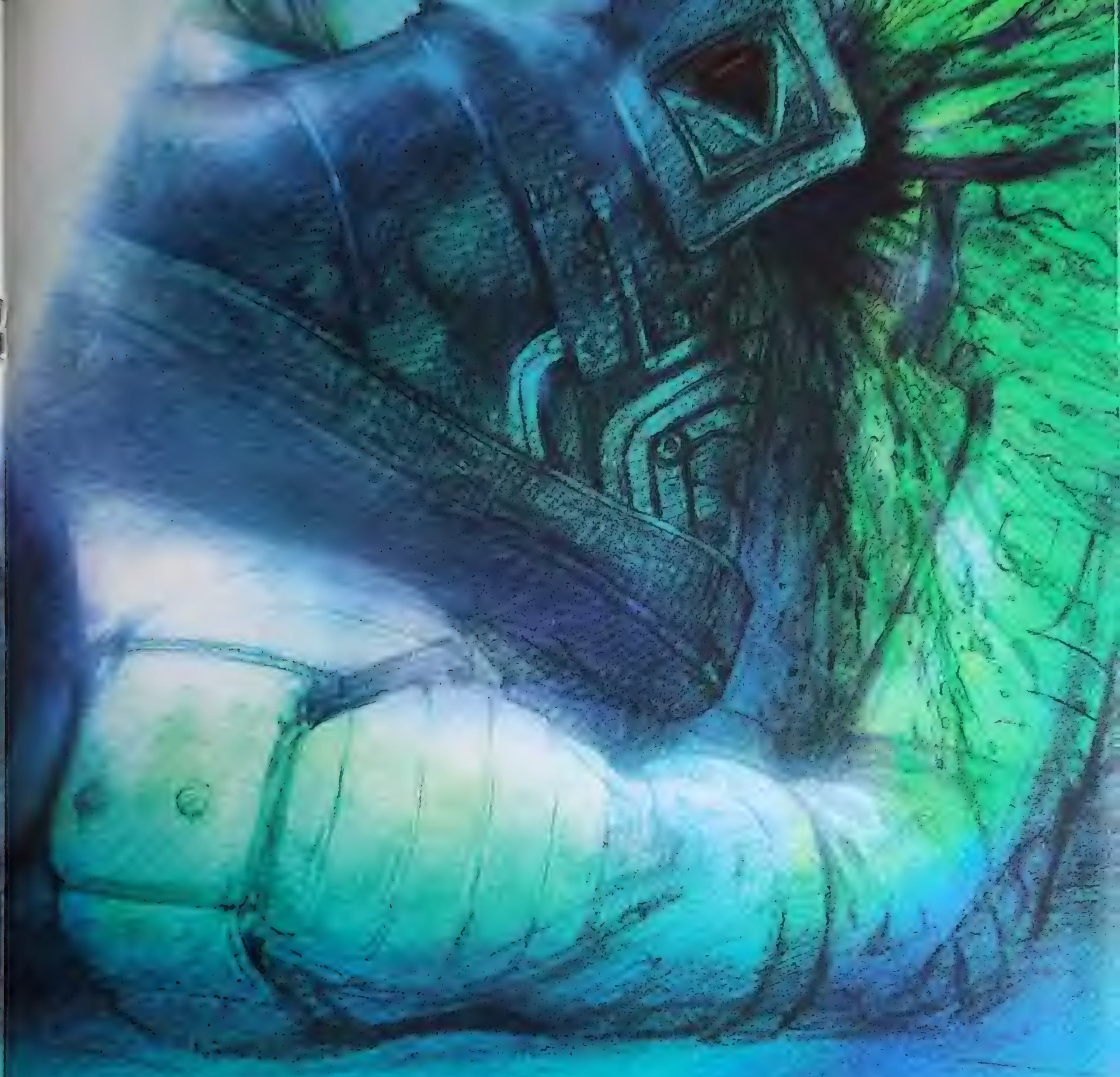
"Important. Withdraw sword," Robo instructed. "Essential to Chosen One's quest."

Flight through darkness

Richard followed his companion's orders and pulled the sword from the heel of his vanquished adversary. Husasan was evaporating away into dust before Richard's amazed eyes.

"Follow me," Robo said, heading for a pin-prick of light in a far corner of the gloomy chamber. Richard got to his feet and once more did as he was instructed. He wiped his sword and returned it to the scabbard around his waist.

As they fled, a ghostly voice could be heard emanating from the remains of Husasan. "Do not enter the library," it



said. "Danger. Daannnggggeeeeeerrrrrr."

"What does it mean?" Richard asked.

WALLS OF MEMORY

Robo scanned his internal circuits for a moment before responding. "Insufficient data," he replied.

The pair entered a dim, narrow tunnel and ran steadily. The walls were coated with foul-smelling green slime, which dripped on to Richard's body armour. Eventually, the tunnel began to widen but the light grew even dimmer.

"Robo, is there any way that you can give us some more light?" Richard asked.

The robot was quick to respond. A beam of light shot out from the lens on his forehead and acted as a torch.

Now that the darkness was gone, Richard was able to look at their strange surroundings. The walls of the tunnel they were travelling through were covered in strange paintings.

The paintings depicted odd, sorrowful faces which seemed to be looking straight at Richard as he passed. They gave him a distinct sense of unease. This feeling turned to panic when one of the faces suddenly spoke to him in a voice that seemed to come from another world.

"Chosen One, go back!" it implored. Richard felt himself start to shake.

"Who are you?" he stuttered, wondering if he had imagined the voice.

"Just a memory," came the faint response. "A fragment of light, an echo in time. Chosen One, there is nothing here for you. Go back!"

THE LIBRARY OF SOULS

If the warning was supposed to frighten Richard, it had the desired effect. With Robo following in his tracks, Richard broke into a run. Despite his blind panic,

He could not avoid noticing that other paintings were magically coming to life. A crescendo of faint and wispy voices followed the two fleeing figures.

"We must find a way out of here!" Richard called out to his robotic companion.

"End of tunnel approaching," Robo said.

The two companions soon found themselves standing in front of a large metal door. Richard tentatively gave it a push and was surprised to find that it opened easily. He walked inside and found himself enveloped in a deep blue light. Gradually his eyes became accustomed to the brightness and he was able to take a look around him. He was standing in a vast gallery, the walls of which were lined with hundreds of glittering glass spheres.

"Sensors indicate that we are presently in The Library."

Robo's voice broke through the silence.

"You mean the library that Husasan warned us to avoid?" Richard inquired.

Before Robo could answer there came a soft, sobbing sound. Somebody in the gallery was crying.

Richard looked around in confusion, but there was nobody to be seen. Then he suddenly realized where the sound was coming from.

Crystal cages

The stacks of glass spheres were alive with movement. Richard picked one up and was amazed to see that inside the ball was a human face. It spoke to him.

"Please... Please help me," it pleaded. "Liberate me from the great darkness."

"How do I do that?" Richard said.

"I've been a captive inside this crystal sphere for an eternity. Please free me. I beg of you."

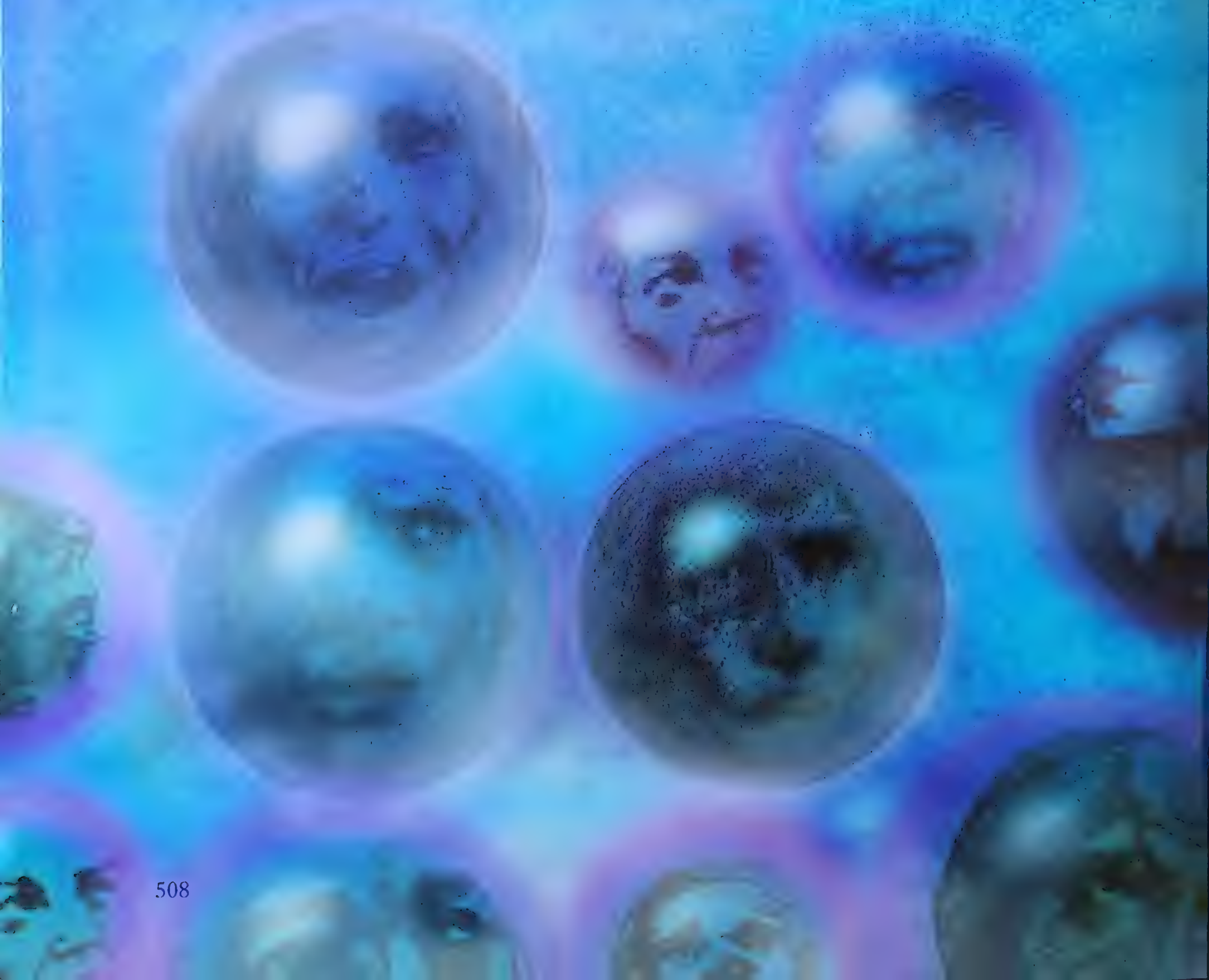
"Who has captured you?"

"The evil Husasan. We are the beings that fuel his energy. Please free me. Break the glass."

Liberation

With a shrug, Richard threw the ball to the floor. It shattered into a million pieces.

Immediately, a cloud of thick, blue smoke issued from the shattered remnants. Richard stared as the cloud began to mould itself into a humanoid



shape. In an instant, a small figure, clad in the purest white, was standing before Richard. It was the most beautiful child he had ever seen.

"Thank you, Chosen One," said the child, in a voice that sounded like the singing of an angel. "Please free my imprisoned friends. Let them endure this wretched existence for not a moment longer."

"Who are you?" Richard asked.

"I am Peter. Before the great explosion that created space and the planets, we were floating beings, existing everywhere, and at one with the universe. Then Husasan trapped us in these spheres, so that he might draw off our life force for himself. I and my people have been held captive by him since the dawn of time. Now I am free again. I am forever in your debt."

Richard stared intently at Peter and felt a wave of happiness wash over him.

A chorus of pleas from the trapped occupants of the other spheres told Richard that his work was not yet over.

"Me too. Free me," the voices cried.

THE GREAT LIE

Watched by Robo, Richard picked up one then another of the spheres and threw them about the room until the vast chamber was filled with the green smoke.

Richard and Robo lost sight of each other as the smoke swirled thickly from the shattered glass spheres. All around him, Richard could hear ecstatic voices calling out in happiness and triumph. One by one, figures began to emerge from the smoke. As they became fully formed, they too began to smash the crystal globes and release their imprisoned kinfolk. Soon all the balls had been broken.

The first sign that all was not well came when Richard noticed the smell of the smoke. It stank of rotten eggs. He held his hands over his face and coughed. As he did so, he heard cruel laughter reverberate throughout the chamber. Something was very definitely wrong.

"Chosen One – you're a fool!" scoffed a small figure emerging from the wreaths of smoke. Richard recognized it as the

angelic form of Peter. "Do you realize what you have done?"

There was an explosion of light and Richard gasped as Peter's figure evaporated. The smoke swirled around until a new form emerged. Dressed in black, the creature danced with glee.

"What do you want from me?" Richard asked in confusion. "Who are you?"

The newcomer smirked, exposing a set of stained and rotting teeth. "We have waited an eternity to be released. How ironic that it is The Chosen One who has freed us.

"We are the remnants of everything evil in the universe," the apparition continued. "When an evil or cruel act is done in any world or dimension, we are the residue from that deed. We are the slime, the scum, the echo of everything that is bad.

"For that you are to receive the ultimate reward."

EVIL INVITATION

Richard looked at the creature. "What are you saying?" he asked.

"You must become one of us."

Suddenly, the room was once more full of smoke. The hordes of scampering figures melted together. Richard and Robo watched as they congealed to form a gigantic parody of a human skull.

"Come to me, Chosen One," it sneered.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

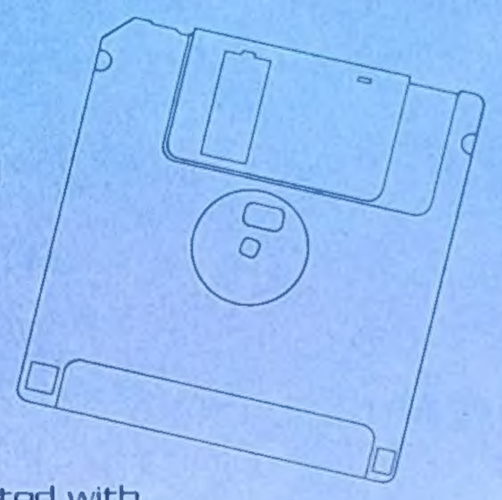
Following closely behind Richard and Robo are the cute little creatures known as Shoomi and Shoobi. Look carefully at the illustrations and see if you can spot where they are hiding in this issue.

In issue 31 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 492.

▶ Computer Challenge

Another vitally important computer component from the sinister *Cyber Dimension* has been hidden in this issue. Help Richard and Robo locate it in less than three minutes.

When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?



In last week's issue, a computer floppy disk was hidden on page 491. Floppy disks are small, portable storage devices that allow information to be transferred between computers. Inside a floppy disk is a thin, circular piece of plastic coated with metal oxide. Like the oxide tape in a music cassette, this substance electronically records digitized computer information. All home computers contain a port which allows the insertion of a floppy disk. Floppy disks are capable of storing between 700 and 1300 bytes of information.

▶ Binary Panel

When decoded, last week's binary message read: "Find the truth that lies behind the light." This cryptic information was the key to defeating the awesome Holotron.

▶ Games boards

In this issue you will find the first piece of your Mainframe Control and Cyber Chess games boards. Cut it out and keep it safe. There will be three other pieces in later issues.

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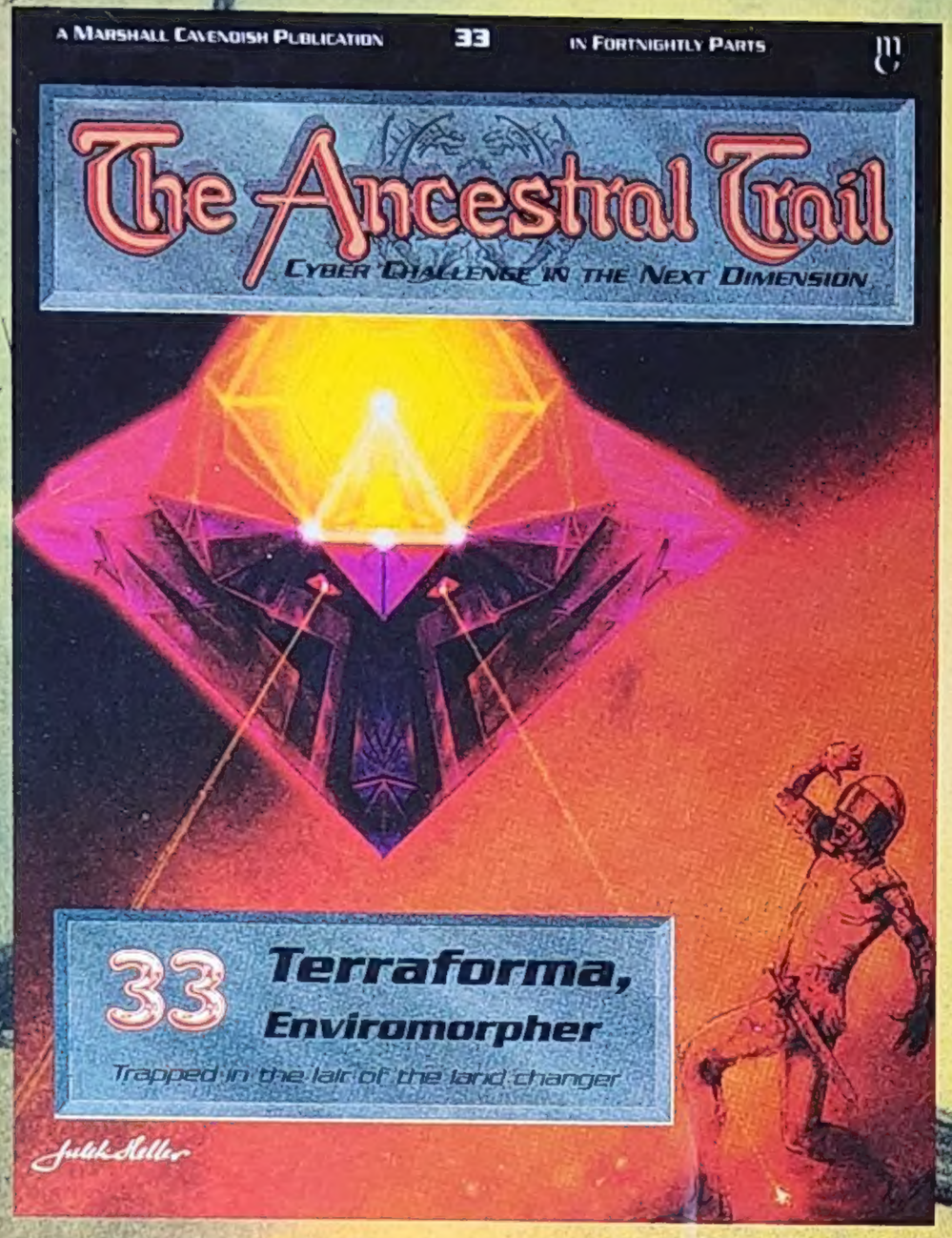

In Issue 33

Terraforma, Enviromorpher

Richard steps into a land of fire and ice to encounter an evil being with the power to transform any environment.

plus

- More Techscan cards for your collection.
- 2 more Cyber Power cards
- More Mainframe Control playing pieces.

Coming in Issue 34

Toxis, Poison Predator

Richard and Robo are captured by a creature that is made from toxic waste. To escape his grip, Richard must find a secret potion.

plus

Another **Techscan** card ▶ 4 more **Cyber Power** cards ▶ First **Cyber Chess** playing pieces.

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